

elling us to do homage to the dying magnanimity of wicked men, is unfaithfulness to the religion which condemns such magnanimity as madness. It is no justification to say that such instances have been known, and therefore such representations are only vividly reflected images of reality; for if the laws of criticism do not enjoin, in works of genius, a careful adaptation of all examples and sentiments to the purest moral purpose, as a far higher duty than the study of resemblance to the actual world, the laws of piety most certainly do. Let the men who have so much literary conscience about this verisimilitude, content themselves with the office of mere historians, and then they may relate without guilt, provided the relation be simple and unvarnished, all the facts, and speeches of depraved greatness within the memory of the world. But when they choose the higher office of inventing and combining, they are accountable for the consequences. They create a new person, and, in sending him into society, they can choose whether his example shall tend to improve or pervert the minds that will be compelled to admire him.

It is an immense transition from such instances as those I have been remarking on, to Rousseau's celebrated description of the death of his Eloisa, which would have been much more properly noticed in an earlier page. It is long since I read that scene, one of the most striking specimens probably of original conception and interesting sentiment that ever appeared; but though the representation is so extended as to include everything which the author thought needful to make it perfect, there is no explicit reference to the peculiarly evangelical causes of complacency in death. Yet the representation is so admirable, that the serious reader is tempted to suspect even his own mind of fanaticism, while he is expressing to his friends the wish that they, and that himself, may be animated, in the last day of life, by a class of ideas which that eloquent writer would have been ashamed to introduce.

LETTER IX.

DOES it not appear to you, my dear friend, that an approving reader of the generality of our ingenious authors will acquire